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A N
A D D R E S S
T O T H E
FREEHOLDERS of MIDDLESEX,
A S S E M B L E D A T
F R E E M A S O N S T A V E R N ,
I N
G R E A T Q U E E N S T R E E T ,
O N
M O N D A Y t h e 2 0 t h o f D E C E M B E R ,

1779.

By JOHN JEBB, M. D. F. R. S.

De Bello Sabino eos referre; tanquam majus ullum populo
Romano bellum sit, quam cum iis, qui legum ferendarum
causa creati, nihil juris in civitate reliquerint: qui comitia,
qui annuos magistratus, qui vicissitudinem imperitandi
(quod unum exæquandæ sit libertatis) sustulerint.

Liv. Lib. III. c. 39.

THE FOURTH EDITION CORRECTED.

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1782.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IN the following tract, I have endeavoured to vindicate the primary rights of the English Commonalty, considered as a component part of the constitution; and have pointed out a peaceable and effectual mode of correcting the abuses of representation, under the sanction of their authority and power.

It has been objected, that by the establishment of Committees and Delegations, a fourth power, unknown to the Constitution, has been called into existence—and that the sense of the People can only be declared by their representatives in Parliament.

On the other side, we are called upon to attend to that fatal subjection of the Commons House of Parliament to the will of the Minister, from whence all our present calamities are derived—a subjection evidently arising from the imperfection of its constitution, or, in other words, from the inequality of the representation, the unwarrantable restrictions of that right of voting, to which every Englishman is intitled, and the prolongation of Parliaments, beyond their ancient period.

In such circumstances can it be our duty to venerate the shadow, the substance being long since fled? Or must we, in a cause peculiarly our own, sit down in criminal inactivity, expectant that our rights shall be recovered by the unassisted exertions of our friends in the aristocracy—or spontaneously conceded to us by the crown?

When the ordinary delegation ceases to express the people's will, are the commons of this country altogether destitute of constitutional resource? When such doctrines are openly maintained, it becomes us not to reason but to act.

The voice of the people is, and ought to be, a voice of terror to a bad government,—but it will ever be listened to by an administration of a different character, with complacency and delight.

It surely therefore must afford peculiar pleasure to those illustrious personages, who now possess the reins of power, when they perceive themselves encouraged and supported, in their generous efforts to restore the constitution, by the grateful voice of an applauding Public.

Among the various measures, recommended for the purpose of restoring freedom and independency to parliament, I must confess there is one to which I am particularly partial. It is certainly allowable for every citizen to promote by peaceful means, while the question lies before the public in its present state of indecision, that specific plan, which, in his own judgment, appears most agreeable to justice and the constitution.—Yet, sensible that whatever has the sanction of less than a majority, is not the act of the Commons of England; I would not be understood to wish the establishment of any other plan of reformation, than that, which upon a fair appeal, shall ultimately approve itself to the general sense of an enlightened people.

Crown Street, 3d of May, 1782.

TO THE
CHAIRMAN of the MEETING
OF THE

Freeholders of *Middlesex*, &c.

S I R,

THE professed design of your meeting, and the present alarming state of public affairs, induce me to submit the following sentiments to the judgment of Yourself, and the other Gentlemen assembled; presuming, if they appear to be founded in reason, they will not be the less regarded, on account of their being suggested by an unknown individual*.

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* It has been suggested to the Author of these pages, that it is possible the Parliament may be dissolved, shortly after the expiration of the present recess. Such an apprehension, if justly founded, will probably operate upon the counties, to press the necessity of a speedy inquiry into the expenditure of the revenue, and incline them strongly to recommend the establishment of certain economical regulations, of no little
con-

The degree of attention, which ought in reason to be paid by the representative in Parliament to the instructions of his constituents, has often been the subject of controversy. It has frequently been contended, when upon various occasions the sentiments of the electors of England have been conveyed to the elected, that the latter were justified in paying no further degree of attention to them, than the arguments, considered independently of the authority of the persons instructing, or remonstrating, appeared to deserve.

It has been urged upon such occasions, that the person, thus instructed, ought to consider himself as the representative of the kingdom at large; and therefore, as not under a particular obligation to obey the instructions of the county, or borough, which returns him. A movement of such importance, as will hereafter be proposed, should be founded on principles, which, like

consequence to the well-being of the state. Such topics, as have a more immediate connection with our political existence, will doubtless not escape their notice.

A people may be, for a time, prosperous and happy, when the persons, to whom the crown confides the powers of administration, act in a manner conformable to the high importance of the trust.

A people is free, when such constitutional checks exist, as render it impracticable for ministers to betray the public cause.

The happiness of Englishmen ought not to depend upon the precarious virtue of a minister of state; they have a right to require, that it be founded on the solid basis of parliamentary independence.

I know some persons, who, if the opportunity, which now presents itself, of securing this important point, should be neglected, will be ready to exclaim *TIME WAS—Actum est de Libertate Anglicanâ*

maxims

maxims of law, or axioms in geometry, admit not of debate†.

With

† The right of the electors of Great Britain, to advise and instruct their representatives, and the obligation which the latter are under, freely to communicate and consult with those, from whom they have received their power, are founded upon the justest principles—The practice is agreeable to immemorial usage; and it would have been happy for this country, had such an intercourse more frequently prevailed. A question however naturally arises concerning the obligation of the representative to obey the instructions of the particular district, or the borough, which returns him, when his deference to the sentiments of other parts of the kingdom, the superior lights he may derive from his situation, or the dictates of his conscience, would incline him to pursue a different conduct.

The following case may assist us in the solution of this difficulty.

Let us suppose that a member of the Commons House of parliament is instructed to declare his dissent, in case a bill should be introduced, which has for its object the abolition of the slave trade—a practice so abhorrent from the dictates of humanity, and the principles of our religion, that I make no scruple of affirming, with a very excellent citizen, and respectable writer, that it ought not to be tolerated in a Christian country.

Let us further suppose, that the majority of the representatives of the people have also been instructed by their constituents, to promote the introduction of a bill, for its immediate abolition.

Let us, lastly, suppose that the principles, on which such a bill is founded, accord with the feelings, and the judgment of the member, who has received instructions to oppose it.

In these circumstances, it is demanded, what is that line of conduct, which it would become such member to pursue, who, attentive to the dictates of conscience and honour, is also willing to approve himself a friend to the rights of human kind?

Since the publication of the last edition of this pamphlet, I have reconsidered this subject, and in consequence of the further lights I have received, am now decidedly of opinion,

that

With greater appearance of reason it has been contended, that the representatives of the Commons, actually assembled in parliament, may permit to lie neglected on their table, the petition or remonstrance of the most respectable, or most populous, county of the kingdom, if the sentiments, contained in the said petition or remonstrance, be discordant with their own.

Partial interests, and a partial conception of the point in question, may with greater probability be supposed to prevail in a county meeting, however respectable, than in the public assembly of the nation. A declaration of opinion, in the strongest language of remonstrance, cannot

that it would be the bounden duty of the member thus instructed, either to comply with the requisition of his constituents, or to resign his trust.

The representative is, properly speaking, the proxy of the inhabitants of the district which returns him. He acts or he assents in the name of parties, who, by the instrumentality of his person, are reputed present in Parliament, and consequently, should consider himself as the organ of their will in every instance where that will is positively declared—If, however, it appears to the representative, that the conduct prescribed, as may readily be supposed in the case before us, can by no means be reconciled with his principles as a christian, or his feelings as a man, he should be allowed an opportunity of divesting himself of a trust, the functions of which he can no longer honestly discharge.

It is asserted by Mr. Burgh, in his political disquisitions, that there is no advantage within the reach of a particular people, that may not be obtained by parliamentary government, in as effectual a manner, as if every inhabitant of the country were to deliberate and vote in person. The position is strictly just, provided an equal representation were established, the right of universal suffrage restored, and the compliance of the representative with the wishes of his constituents secured by the abolition of the undue influence of the crown, and the reduction of Parliaments to their ancient period.

be unlawful, and may frequently be expedient; and the right of petitioning is a privilege, to which the obscurest individual is intitled. But the power to reject, or to redress, must, in ordinary instances, be considered as vested in the general representative of all the commons of England†.

For

† Every subject of this State is not only authorized, but by the Genius of English liberty he is encouraged and exhorted, freely to examine the defects of the constitution—the errors of government—and the conduct of the persons, employed in its various departments; and as freely to censure, wherever censure, in his judgment, shall be due. I am sometimes afraid, that the present inattention of the nation, to affairs of State, is a symptom of its approaching dissolution. I wish to see the ancient spirit of my countrymen revive—I wish to see them a nation of politicians, and the principle of the famous ordinance of Solon universally prevail. There are times, when it should be esteemed criminal in any person, arrived at years of discretion, not to have formed an opinion—reasonable, when a fair opportunity presents itself, not to propagate, and support his opinion, by the force of argument, and every legal method in his power.

For these and many other reasons, the usurped power of excluding the subject from the galleries of the Commons House of Parliament, more especially as exercised of late years, appears to me a direct violation of one of the most important privileges of the People. It deprives the elector of the opportunity of hearing, what it highly concerns him to know; and diminishes the force of that salutary apprehension, in the mind of the elected, which, in the midst of the temptations he is exposed to, has not unfrequently afforded considerable assistance to his virtue. It defrauds the true patriot of part of his reward, and shelters the person of the midnight assassin of the constitution, from deserved ignominy and disgrace; but I forbear.

The only argument offered in justification of this practice, that deserves the least attention, is founded upon the idea, that foreign Powers may thus become more easily acquainted with our national concerns. But such arguments would have

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For although it be allowed, that the inhabitants of a district, which returns a member to the Commons House of Parliament, have a right to influence the conduct of their representative, yet every other member, not similarly instructed, is free to act as his own discretion shall direct.

Hence, upon an application to the Commons House of Parliament, if the petitioning party be a minority of the kingdom, the voice of the majority in Parliament ought to prevail against a minority of the constituent body.

I am sensible however, that cases may occur, particularly cases of election, in which, the Commons House of Parliament may extend its jurisdiction beyond the bounds prescribed by reason and the constitution—in such I do not hold, that the aggrieved electors, even of a single district, can be concluded by a parliamentary vote.

But if doubts have arisen, concerning the obligation of an individual in the Commons House of Parliament, to attend to the instructions of his immediate constituent, with very little appearance of reason can it be maintained, that the electors or freeholders of a single city or county have a right to dictate the line of conduct to the Crown.

no place, were the deliberations of the Commons House of Parliament confined to the proper objects. It has, with reason, been asserted, that this branch of the legislature, of late years, has too frequently assumed the executive functions of government.

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The King, the House of Lords, and the Commons of this Country, fairly and adequately represented in Parliament, are to be considered, with respect to each other, as free and independent*—

* It was my intention, in using these strong expressions, to impress upon the minds of my countrymen an important truth, the right conception of which may have a considerable influence upon their future conduct.

By these expressions, however, I would be only understood to mean, that, in case any one of the three divisions of the Legislature should refuse to comply with the inclinations of the other two; or should even be disposed to act in opposition to them, the combined portions are not invested, by the constitution, with any authority to compel the dissentient party to a concurrence with their measures, or legally to arraign its conduct:

The proper rights and functions of each of these powers; and the passions incident to human nature, when placed in certain circumstances, tend however, to unite them, on every occasion, where the public good requires their consent; and the same passions also tend to control, or moderate, their mutual actions, and effectually to prevent their union; when such union would obstruct the general welfare of the state. I readily acknowledge, that, in this sense, no branch of the Legislature can be considered as free and independent. They all are subjected, equally with individuals, to those moral causes, which, in the most exalted state of political liberty, with resistless energy, though frequently silent, and unobserved, control, direct and modify the actions of mankind.

But I here am speaking of the English constitution, according to its model of perfection, not its present state:

Let any unprejudiced person consult the Political Disquisitions of the late excellent Mr. Burgh; let him attend to facts, which must have fallen within his proper knowledge; and he may possibly be inclined to doubt, whether an English House of Commons is in being at this instant. Let him turn his attention to the rising spirit of this much insulted Nation, and it is possible he may conceive, that the present is the moment for giving existence to such a body; and that this might be effected, by measures perfectly constitutional and pacific.

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while the constitution subsists, they are equally exempt from the most distant idea of mutual coercion and control.

If, therefore, all the Commons of England, represented in Parliament, cannot presume to dictate to the crown, without an infringement of its rights, how slender must be the claim of a single portion of the constituent body to such an high prerogative?

This doctrine, I trust, will not be found in the least to militate against the acknowledged right of the people to new-model the Constitution, and to punish with exemplary rigour every person, with whom they have entrusted power, provided, in their opinion, he shall be found to have betrayed that trust.

I speak only of a period, when, from the acquiescence of the people, it plainly appears to be their will, that the form of government, already established, should continue in existence.

Widely different from the present, would be the nature of my argument, and the energy of my expressions, were I treating of that solemn hour, when the delegates of a state, chosen according to forms, which not law and custom, but necessity or expedience shall prescribe, and assembling for the purpose of inquiring into the abuse of power, shall sit in awful judgment upon the traitorous invaders of their rights. In such assembly alone, I acknowledge the SOVEREIGN power to reside. To such alone, the tremendous name of MAJESTY may with propriety be attributed. And compared

pared with its imperial jurisdiction, the prerogatives of the Crown, the splendid privileges of the Nobles, and the authority of the Commons house of Parliament, either separately considered, or combined, are less than dust upon the scale†.

For the reasons above mentioned, and others to which I shall not at present call the attention of my readers, the memorable petitions of the freeholders of Middlesex, and of other counties of England to the Crown, praying a dissolution of the Parliament, appear to have been very ill calculated to produce any salutary effect. To what purpose was it to prefer an ungrateful petition to a power, which you could not legally coerce? Men possessed of power are not disposed to part with it, upon the petition of the persons, who have declared themselves injured by its exertion. Such mode of seeking redress rather tends to perpetuate the grievances, of which we complain. It cannot be construed a breach of Privilege to assert, that the House of Commons of that day was an ENGINE OF OPPRESSION, worked by that

† Great advantage would be derived to the community, were our Fellow Citizens, of the lower classes, properly instructed in the just and constitutional meaning of such terms as the following, viz. *Majesty—Subject—Sovereign—Republic—Loyalty—Allegiance—Rebellion—Treason—Prærogative—King's Bread—King's Armies—My People, &c.* We never can expect to behold a proper exertion of the natural good sense, and spirit of the Nation, until the understandings, and affections, of all orders of men, are emancipated from the influence of the false ideas, which ignorance, or the art of designing politicians have annexed to these expressions.

very power, from which it was requested the destruction of it should proceed*.

Whether the same objections can reasonably be urged against the following measures, the wisdom of your Assembly must decide. I will state my idea with all the brevity and precision in my power.

As there is reason to believe that other counties will soon follow your laudable example, in appointing meetings, for the purpose of maintaining and supporting the freedom of election, it might not be improper for the county, which sets the glorious example, to draw the outlines of a regular plan, in which all the counties, that may here-

* These Remonstrances of the Counties, so far as they were declarations of the opinion of the petitioning parties, respecting the transaction here alluded to, were perfectly constitutional. The error consisted in requesting or expecting, as matters were then circumstanced, that the Crown would interfere in the dispute. There is a difference between an obligation strictly moral, and an obligation established by the sanctions of Municipal law. There is also a difference between being obliged to receive a petition, and being obliged to comply with its prayer.

Whenever it is in contemplation, to offer a petition to a power, of whose friendly disposition a doubt is entertained, the petitioning parties should always ask themselves the following question, viz. supposing our suit should be rejected, or passed over without notice, is it in our power to manifest such resentment, as may induce the rejecters to pay greater attention to a second application. If the parties petitioned apprehend, that the supplicants are possessed of such a power, they will, in all probability, attend even to the first request.

The conduct of the English minister to a sister Kingdom will afford a comment to this doctrine.

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after be disposed to pursue a similar line of conduct, may concur.

With a view of facilitating the execution of any important measure, hereafter to be adopted, it would be expedient to institute a general estimate of the number of the inhabitants, contained in the several counties, cities, and principal manufacturing towns in this Kingdom; and from thence to form a calculation of the number of Deputies, which ought to be sent by each, provided it should be thought requisite for them to confer upon the proper measures for carrying their resolutions into effect.

As soon as these numbers are ascertained, let the idea be communicated to the approved friends of liberty in other counties, and let it be submitted to their judgment, whether it would not be expedient to establish standing Committees, and to have respect to the aforesaid calculation, in their appointment. For instance; if the Middlesex Committee should consist of (thirty) members, the standing Committee of Yorkshire, Norfolk, Hampshire, Huntingdonshire, &c. should consist of a number, proportioned to the population of those counties.

It will doubtless appear an adviseable measure, after such standing Committees have been established, that they should communicate, from time to time, with each other, by their chairmen or secretaries, and, by their joint and separate influence, endeavour to induce other counties to follow their example; but it would, by no means, be expedient for them, to associate in the prosecution

tion of any invariable plan, until it shall appear, that a majority of the kingdom shall be willing to concur in one design.

When this moment is arrived, the Committees of each county may depute a proportionate number of their body, to confer upon a proper form of remonstrance to the Commons House of Parliament; in which may be set forth the grievance, the nature of the expected redress, with a subjoined demand of such redress, within a limited time.

It may in the last place appear expedient, after a form of remonstrance has been approved by the Committees, that it should be properly authenticated, as the public ACT of the combined counties. It would then be ready for presentation at the bar of the House, according to such solemnities, and with such attendance, as the laws may authorize, and the importance of the subject matter demand.

The objection that lay against the idea of a single county petitioning Parliament, or of all the counties in succession, would here have no place. The counties, thus remonstrating in combination, might justly assume a very different tone from the same counties without such connection. The command would proceed from the principal to the delegate, from the master to the servant, against whom may be issued an immediate revocation of all discretionary powers, the moment it is perceived, that the concerns of the principal are likely to suffer, through the want of honesty, or ability, in the person he employs.

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The former plea of the delegate, that he is a representative of the community at large, may be urged against him, for here the community at large requires his compliance.

It is also to be considered, that the members of the House of Commons sit not in their own right, (like the King and Nobles) but as proxies for others; and the proxy ought in all reason to be regarded as annihilated, when the voice of the principal shall be thus distinctly heard.

The King, the hereditary Nobility, and the Commons, form the constitutional legislature of this country. The particular manner, in which the latter give their voice is a subordinate consideration. If they could assemble in person for this purpose, as was the case at Athens, and at Rome, the highest respect would be due to such transcendent authority: But as such mode is liable to very forcible objections, and indeed would be impracticable, the proper expedient is an equal and adequate representation; and in such a representative, whether it be convoked by ordinary or extraordinary forms, I apprehend every power and privilege, with which a Commons House of Parliament can be invested, do substantially reside†.

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† It is the proper end and aim of representation, that the interests of all classes and descriptions of men should, without respect of parties, be effectually consulted, in the public ordinances of the nation. Whether these interests may be best secured, by attending to property, or to numbers, is a subject deserving of the most serious attention.

It

But let us imagine, for a moment, that an authority, thus respectable, on account of property and numbers, should not in this instance be obeyed.

The persons, delegated by the Committees to carry this mandate to the House of Commons, report to the bodies which deputed them, the event of their remonstrance.

The Committees assemble the Counties, and make a report of their proceedings.

Under these circumstances, Persons of character and influence may arise in each county assembly, and propose the election of a new committee, formed upon the same principles, but intrusted with more important powers*: it may also

It has been strenuously maintained, that it would be impolitic to extend the election franchise to the lower orders of society, and that greater disorders, than what we already experience, would ensue from such indulgence. Others, with greater appearance of reason, assert, that these disorders actually arise in consequence of the subtraction of those political rights to which every Englishman is intitled, and certain defects in the mode of conducting Elections, which a few plain and simple regulations would remove.

I beg leave to refer my readers, who are desirous of information with respect both to the matter of right and expediency, to the various publications of Major Cartwright, Mr. Granville Sharp, and the Rev. Mr. Northcote, who have unfolded the nature of the elective franchise, and defended the claim of every citizen to its enjoyment, with the utmost perspicuity and unanswerable strength of argument.

* A proposition, expressive of this idea, might be conceived in the following terms.

“ That

also be expedient to recommend a general association of the county, by the terms of which, the parties lay themselves under a solemn obligation, as men of honour, and friends of their country, to agree to, and support, every constitutional measure, which the major part of the committees shall think it expedient to propose, for the purpose of obtaining an effectual redress.

The attention of the people will thus at length be excited—they will see before them a set of men who are guiltless of the charge of having betrayed the most important of all trusts—an entire confidence will be reposed in them by their constituents—and the consciousness of this confidence will give additional vigour to every resolution. Measures dictated by patriotism, directed by prudence, and supported by a sterner spirit of perseverance, than hath hitherto been manifested, will be the unavoidable result. What measures may be proper to be adopted, circumstances, with which every future hour will be pregnant, must determine. I will not presume, even in idea, to

“ That it is the sense of the inhabitants of this city or county, that () persons be appointed a committee for the purpose of deliberating with the committees of like-disposed cities or counties, upon the state of the *Representation*—that the members of this committee be hereby authorized to exercise all such powers, as by immemorial usage do belong to the members of the Commons House of Parliament—that they be also invested with the further power of assenting, in conjunction with the King and Hereditary Nobility, to such regulations, as may be proposed, for the purpose of establishing an equal and universal representation of the People, in sessional Parliaments, agreeable to the ancient constitution and customs of this realm—and, lastly, that this commission shall terminate at the expiration of () months.”

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anticipate,

anticipate, what may be thought expedient by the concentrated wisdom of an enlightened People.

I am however of opinion, that if such combined assemblies should in solemn council declare, that the present House of Commons was dissolved, such declaration would be truly constitutional, and that the requisite power would not be wanting to give validity to the decree.

I am also of opinion, that whatever regulations, respecting the mode of electing representatives, and the forms of convoking future Parliaments in this kingdom, might be agreed upon in such convention, and should afterwards be assented to by the Nobles and the King, ought to be regarded as constitutional ordinances of the sovereign power, until they are repealed by a similar authority; and that the acts of every future parliament, convoked in conformity to the regulations thus established, would have all the authority of law*.

* The celebrated Junius, in a letter to Mr. Wilkes, expresses his doubts, whether the disfranchising the boroughs, could, *de jure*, be effected by an act of the Legislature, upon the general ground of improving the constitution. He demands, by what kind of reasoning it can be proved, that there is a power vested in the representative, to destroy its immediate constituent?

The principles advanced, and I trust, established, in this tract, will afford a satisfactory solution of this difficulty. They will, I hope, enable every reader to discern, that those important and necessary regulations, which the present House of Commons may have neither the power, nor the disposition to enact, can, beyond all controversy, be established, by the paramount authority of an equal and adequate representative, elected by the suffrages of *all the Commons of England*, for the very purpose in question.

According

According to this idea, no unconstitutional coercion would be exerted against the remaining branches of the Legislature †; each would possess its proper independency, and freedom from external constraint; but would perhaps perceive it to be prudent to comply with the temperate claims, and wishes of the Commons. No other expedient would be necessary than the withholding of the supplies.

Thus might at length be obtained the blessing of an equal, annual, and universal representation of the Commons: the only effectual remedy for the increasing disorders of our distempered state†.

Thus,

† It may reasonably be presumed, that the proposed measures would be supported by the general concurrence of the hereditary Nobility of this kingdom; as every diminution of the present enormous influence of the Crown tends to restore, to that illustrious order of our fellow citizens, its proper dignity and constitutional importance.

† It lies not within the powers of my feeble pen, to describe, in adequate language, the various good effects, that in all probability would be derived from this source. One particularly strikes me at this moment, which has not hitherto been sufficiently considered; and, as its object is improvement in virtue, I hope the friends of virtue will attend to it.

As matters are circumstanced at present, the number of persons is comparatively small, who can reasonably expect to obtain a seat in that assembly, which, if formed according to the spirit of our constitution, would be one of the most respectable assemblies upon Earth. But were the duration of parliaments abridged—the election of members less open to undue influence—and a plan of rotation and equal representation established, many Youths of spirit and ability, animated by the prospect of the flattering distinction, to which the free unbiassed voice of their fellow citizens might raise them, would learn to disdain each meaner gratification, and feel within them sentiments, rising responsive to the voice of

Thus, the fabric of government, reared by our ancestors, at the expence of so much labour and blood, would appear in finished beauty, and the popular pillar of the Constitution, thus set upon its proper basis, would give security and permanency to the whole*.

I have

virtue, and of that honest fame, which, in the language of the Poet, *Carminē gravior, aures occupat humanam*.

I trust there is more than one illustrious Senator, who fully can comprehend my meaning, and whose future rectitude of conduct will verify my words.

What the incomparable Beccaria says of an enslaved people in general, holds true also with respect to those, who find themselves excluded from bearing a part in framing the laws and directing the public counsels of their country. “ Gli uomini schiavi sono più voluttuosi, più libertini, più crudeli degli uomini liberi. Questi meditano sulle scienze, meditano sugli interessi della Nazione, veggono grandi oggetti, e gl’imitano; ma queglii contenti del giorno presente cercano fra lo strepito del libertinaggio una distrazione dall’annientamento, in cui si veggono.”

Beccaria dei Delitti e delle Pene, p. 190.

* The idea of an equal and adequate representation was, several years ago, proposed, and ably supported, in the House of Commons, by that intelligent and inflexible assertor of English Liberties, Mr. Wilkes. And in the beginning of June 1780, the Duke of Richmond, to his immortal honour, proposed a Bill for the establishment of an equal representation of the Commons in annual Parliaments, and the restitution of the right of suffrage to those numerous classes of our fellow citizens, who, at various times, and on various pretences, have been deprived of this their best inheritance, and most effectual security against the restless machinations of despotic power.

Were the measure now adopted, a FEDERAL UNION with the American States, productive of the greatest commercial, as well as other political advantages, would probably take place; and this perhaps at no very distant period. Amidst the present disorders of our distempered state, they may possibly esteem it dangerous to be connected with a nation, so nearly allied to perdition.

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I have much to urge in confirmation of my opinion—I am aware of objections—and I am not unprepared to reply to them. But I mean not to trespass any further on your patience. I submit this general sketch of my present sentiments, with deference, to a set of Gentlemen, who I trust understand the rights of their fellow citizens, and have already manifested a becoming spirit in their support.

The leading principles of my idea may be recapitulated in the following words.

Alarmed when I recollect the fate of former remonstrances, in favour of the injured rights of Election †; I would suggest to my fellow citizens, that, although petitions from a majority of the counties, when acting single or unconnected, might be rejected, greater respect would be paid to the

The arts, that have been used to inflame the minds of the People of England, against their brethren on the other side of the Atlantic, have hitherto proved but too successful. I trust, however, they now begin to fail; and that a temper, more becoming the ancient generosity and humanity of our Nation, and more congenial to the spirit of the Religion we profess, will actuate our counsels. The great, the good Dr. Price has so ably touched this subject, that it would be presumption in me to add any further reflexions of my own. To his sound and catholic doctrine I subscribe with heart and hand.

The principal ideas, contained in the plan now proposed, have long been present to the mind of the writer. Strongly impressed with the persuasion, that an English House of Commons, in order to its answering, in any degree, the purposes of its institution, ought to be a real representation of the people, he suggested to Sir George Saville his sentiments, respecting the necessity and the practicability of a reformation, in the spring of the year 1776: communicating what is now made public, to that excellent citizen, in two private letters, under the signature of *Salus Publica*, originally annexed to this address.

† *Ita dum singuli pugnant, universi vincuntur.* Tacit. Agric.
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remonstrance of the same counties combined. As the voice of such majority would, strictly speaking, be the voice of the Commons of this country.

I would also impress my Countrymen with a persuasion, that if they wish to effect their political salvation, it will be necessary for them steadily to keep in view some ONE CONSTITUTIONAL POINT, clear, distinct, and comprehensive in its nature—expressed in terms, adapted to the understandings of all orders of men—such as the intelligent and the virtuous of all parties will approve—and which, if attained, will not only render us an happy and an united people, but insure the enjoyment of every national advantage to our latest posterity*.

* The single measure, which, in my apprehension, would correspond, in every particular, to the characteristics above recited, is the establishment of a Commons House of Parliament, in exact conformity to the primæval principles of the Constitution of this country†.

Unless the independency of this division of the Legislature be maintained, its existence can be but of little consequence to the People. It is surely a reasonable wish, and it ought to be the wish of every Englishman, that the Commons of this country may have their interests and inclinations consulted, and attended to, IN THEIR OWN HOUSE. In such circumstances, it would never be in the power of an abandoned administration, with its dependent tribes of placemen, pensioners and contractors, to riot unrestrained in the public plunder—sacrificing, with unbounding prodigality, at the shrine of despotism, the resources of the present generation, and the just inheritance of millions yet unborn; while discontent, distress, and disgrace prevail, in every part of this once glorious, happy and extensive empire: or, to sum up in a few words, what would require many volumes in the detail, it would follow as a consequence in immediate connection, that the Public would for ever be secured, against the treachery and insults OF ITS OWN SERVANTS.

† It is a satisfaction to me to reflect that I am supported, with respect to the principal doctrines avowed in the preceding pages, by the following very respectable authorities.

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Measures of extensive utility are generally plain and simple, and immediately approve themselves to the general sense of mankind; with respect to such therefore UNANIMITY may be expected.

It is also to be considered, that the same legal exertion of spirit, which, under the guidance of wisdom and moderation, would establish one point of comparatively small consequence, would secure to us the possession of the most important, beyond the influence of time and chance.

That the friends of liberty and of their country should COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER, and in all their resolutions, should LOOK FORWARD TO FUTURITY; appear to me to be maxims, strongly suggested by the complexion of the times.

I have only to add, that, when the times of distress, long predicted, shall arrive, the requisite temper and prudence may be wanting for the conception of such schemes, as may be necessary for the salvation of our Country. But a plan may be proposed—may be deliberated upon—and in part assented to, in that hour of tranquillity which precedes the storm.

" By the *Common Law*, all *freemen* of England had a voice in the Election of these Knights, within the counties where they dwelt; but now by these statutes of 8th Hen. VI. and 10th Hen. VI. they are restrained to such as have 40s. *freehold* per annum within the county."

Dalton's Sheriff, p. 334.

Westminster Committee, March 20, 1780.

Resolved, " That annual Parliaments are the undoubted right of the people of England, and that the act which prolonged their duration was subversive of the constitution, and a violation on the part of the representatives, of the sacred trust reposed in them by their constituents.

" Resolved, That the present state of the representation of this country is inadequate to the object, and a departure from the first principles of the constitution."

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At a general Meeting of the City of Westminster, April 6, 1780.

Resolved, " That it is the opinion of this meeting, that the people of England have, and always had, a clear, unalienable, indefeasible right to an annual election of their representatives, as well as to an adequate and equal representation, founded upon stronger grounds than that of any act or acts of parliament, *and that the attainment of these constitutional important objects, is the most effectual expedient for restoring and securing the independence of Parliament.*"

Council Chamber, Guildhall, April 7, 1780.

" The noble and manly proof which your Lordship has given in your letter to the county of Wilts of your decided concurrence in the undoubted right of the people to short parliaments, and the necessity of a more equal representation, cannot but increase our regard, esteem and confidence; and your Lordship in your further prosecution of those great constitutional objects, may depend on the most firm and determined support from the City of London."

Extract of a letter from the common council of the City of London to the Earl of Shelburne,

Westminster Committee, June 13, 1780.

Resolved, " That the thanks of this Committee be given to the Duke of Richmond, for his late motion in favour of an annual, equal, and universal representation of the Commons; a measure which is founded on the broad basis of constitutional liberty, and the common rights of mankind; and would in the opinion of this committee, be immediately productive of that parliamentary freedom and independency, which it is the purpose of our association to promote."

Surry Committee, Nov. 11, and Westminster Committee, Nov. 17, 1780.

Resolved, " That the voice of the Commons of England is no less necessary for every legislative purpose, than that of either the Sovereign or the Lords—and *that therefore the people claim it as their just and inherent privilege to correct the abuses of representation, whenever such abuses shall have so increased, as to rob them of their constitutional share in their own government.*"

At a full Meeting of the Grand Jury, Gentlemen, and Freeholders of the County of Galway, March 31, 1782.

Resolved, " That when we daily see the mandate of the minister supersede all conviction in debate—when placed and pensioned members of Parliament notoriously support in public, measures, which they condemn in private—when the hirelings of corruption avow, and Government has exemplified in recent instances of distinguished public characters, that to vote according to conscience amounts to a disqualification to hold any office in the service of our country, *it is time for the people to look to themselves, and in great national questions to assert their right to controul those, who owe their political existence to their breath, and may be annihilated by their displeasure.*"